

**SELF-LEARNING REPORT**

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**Introduction:**

One of the criteria I want to satisfy within my career is to work in Germany. This year I want to use my self-learning project to progress in this language in order to find more easily an internship in this country.

I would like to focus my learning on vocabulary and on fluency of this language in the field of business and job interview.

I was born in Alsace and I lived for a long time near the border. I've always been more or less in contact with the country and the germanium language. My grandparents speak Alsatian, a German dialect, in everyday life that is why I was used to talk this language. In this way, I had the possibility to develop my ear and now I'm able easily to understand this language.

However, my vocabulary is limited because since high school, I have no German class and I didn't have opportunity to practice. It is only in my family context that I have the possibility to spend with this language in a very common and in a familiar register.

During my second year in my engineering school, my working life plan in Germany was already established. I started alone to study this language at home. I am S and J so I ​​naturally took a book with the 1600 most common words and then I created a schedule of revisions spread over the year. Every week, I learned new words or I reviewed those I already knew. I never stopped and I finished my learning in time. This approach was reassuring for me because I could see visibly in the book how I advanced in my self-learning and it was easy for me to self-evaluate during some vocabulary tests.

The disadvantage of this method of working was that it didn't allow me to practice in real condition my language competences and I never had the possibility to apply what I had learned. Moreover, I observed that it was not because I had learned by heart a word that I could necessarily use it in a discussion.

Furthermore, during my second engineer year, I tried to make a two-month internship in Germany during the summer. So I made several interviews (by phone, Skype or on-site). These interviews had always run well but my vocabulary was not always coming spontaneously. I always had to think about my word lists. I lacked practice.

That's why this year; I want to use my self-learning project on the topic "the world of business and job interview."

1. **The project**
2. **Problematization**

This year, I would like that my project is focused on two axes.

First, unlike last year, this year I want to try another learning’s way that the one which comes naturally to me. By testing another methods, less comfortable for me, I want particularly develop my side N.

Indeed, through this project, I want to prove to myself that there exists some less stringent learning way than the one I had usually used. I wish to discover less constraint learning way. In fact, I used to work and learn by obligation or by duty rather than pleasure. So I want to find a nice and fun way to learn. I would like also to further develop my overall vision. I want to discover a different way of working, more general and also more efficient. Indeed, I am in an engineering school and in a Master in parallel; I will probably not have time each evening to write and revise a new flashcards. It will therefore be necessary that I learn to reconcile the tasks I have to do.

In deed, I have only five full months to realize my project and since the first months, I will have to spend my first interview. It will therefore be essential that I gain at the start of my project an overview of vocabulary and of how to pass an interview in Germany. Methods that I instinctively used to use, in order to learn, are not suitable. By being S, I will more easily take a book of vocabulary or grammar and studied it chapter by chapter. For this project, I will have to use another way more efficient to learn vocabulary in many areas, in order to be able to run an interview.

The second axe is more personal. My family is bilingual; I have great difficulty to communicate in German with them. I fear their judgments. That has rubbed on my capacity to express myself in this language. I very don't have faith in me.

Nevertheless, I'm very attracting by this land and I really want to work there. When I'm in the street or when I had to speak without having judgement or issues, I know that I can do it. Doing interviews or just talking with my family or some "important" persons makes me anxious. Discussing face to face with this type of person will therefore be a real challenge for me.

In order to have an internship in Germany, I will be compelled to pass interviews in this language. I really have to work on my fear. That is my biggest challenge. If I succeed in manage my stress, it will probably help me to unlock the fear that I have when I express myself. Once this hurdle crossed, I'll be more comfortable in an interview, and I will have more chance to achieve my goal to make my internship in Germany.

Considering these two axes, my problematic for my project is:

**How quickly acquire a varied and essential vocabulary of a foreign language in order to properly conduct an interview while gaining, both gradually and as from the beginning of my project, self-confidence?**

1. **The process of the project**



To conduct my project, I cut it into five phases that helped me to organize my work both in the determination of tasks than in their planning. Moreover, in each phase, I have set myself very specific objectives.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 9/09-23/09 | 23/09-07/10 | 14/10-28/10 | 28/10-11/11 | 11/11-25/11 | 25/11-09/12 | 09/12-23/12 | 06/01-20/01 |
| Preparation’s phase | **✔** | **✔** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Preparation in order to send some candidatures |  | **✔** | **✔** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Phase of research and application |  |  | **✔** | **✔** | **✔** |  |  |  |
| Interview phase |  |  |  | **✔** | **✔** | **✔** |  |  |
| Self-Assessment Phase |  |  |  |  |  |  | **✔** | **✔** |

**Phase 1: Preparation’s phase:**

This phase has as its goal to re-tame my knowledge in this language and determine my initial level in order to evaluate at the end of my project as well as possible my progress. This phase also had a goal to find a way to introduce the learning of language in everyday life and in a sustainable way, and thus to create new habits which are linked to my self-learning in my everyday life. Finally, this phase also wanted to be a time for me to calm my fear from having lost what I learned, and thus to regain confidence in my abilities.

**Phase 2: Preparation in order to present some candidatures:**

Before any applications, it is necessary to fully prepare my CV, my data and my cover letter. I prepared this documents in three languages: French, English and German because depending the offer and the company recruiting, it was necessary to respond in the language that the company wanted.

**Phase 3: Phase of research and application:**

The research and sending phase is long and indispensable to the achievement of my project. During this time, I also wanted to find a way to profit from tasks that I was realizing for my self-learning in order to prepare to the next phase.



**Phase 4: Interview phase:**

This phase was the most difficult one to pass in the field of personal development because it was very stressful for me to express myself in oral and I was confronted with others and thus their judgments.

**Phase 5: Self-Assessment Phase:**

In any project, it is essential to take a step back and see the progress of the latter. I assess my-self on three points: how I carry this project, my progress in language and my personal development.

Thus, by structuring my project from the start, I knew at any moment where I was going and what my goals were. It was a way to always keep the cap over my original goal and my problematic. Moreover, these phases were not clearly defined in their tasks; I could adapt at any time and find other activities that fit best.

I do not have the habit of using this type of planning with just some main axes. In general, I explicit from the outset each task I will do and when. By working as well, I was at once framed and free. This way of planning my project was a discovery for me who used to trace the path to take from the start and who follow it almost mechanically.

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1. **Two lines of development**
2. **Development of my “side N”**

In order to recreate some affinities with the language at the beginning of my project and in order to learn and memorize new vocabulary while having fun and by transforming my self-learning in a hobby, I decided to read a novel. This reading has helped me develop a new way of learning which was very different than methods that I used to use.

Indeed, by being S, I turned instinctively to a grammar book and I used to study chapter by chapter the different rules and I used to learn the vocabulary, theme after theme. For example, last year, I had bought myself a lexicon and every week I used to learn some vocabulary. By reading a novel, I learned words in another manner, randomly and comprehensively. In fact, in this way, I was able to collect vocabulary, which come from a large number of fields in the same time. This was a totally different approach. I had first thought that it was a less rigorous way to learn but this was not the case. We can describe this approach as a "parallel learning" whereas before I was using a "linear learning."

In order to more closely match my project, I then bought a German book explaining how achieved a perfect interview. Constrained by the time, I also read this book in a non-linear manner. I have not had time to read every chapter, one after one. So I selected gradually chapters that interested me. Each interview that I made reveals new improvements or questions. In function of it, I choose to read a chapters rather than another. At first, it bothered me because I felt that if I didn't follow a linear reading of the book I would not well understand. But little by little, I enjoyed selecting my reading and I developed an ability to connect different parts. In my future life, I'll not always have the time to read a whole book but I will be able to go to the key quickly.

In this way, I discovered a new way of reading and of getting my self-learning. By operating in this way, I felt freer to choose my readings and chapters that fit best to my expectations. I've also been more effective in my learning by focus on the essentials. This way of working has also allowed me to be less tense and to operate with more envy rather than duty. So I found a way to learn by taking pleasure.

Furthermore, I introduced a new habit of viewing daily information. This was a way I found to develop my ear and my overall listening. In fact, I had trouble at first to just watch and listen the daily news every day. I felt compelled to note all the vocabulary that I heard in order to memorize it. I then decide that in order to keep this habit of daily listening, it had to be a pleasure and therefore be the less stressful possible. So I had to letting go and to allow me to "do nothing" when I'm watching the news by taking my breakfast. It is only when the viewing is finished that I focus on the words that have marked me. In addition, I noticed that every day, this activity allows me to retain and learn new words. Moreover, when I learn these words in a context, it helps me to remember it.

Finally, during my research and in order to learn vocabulary about the interview, I also took in a different path. Instinctively, I look for ready-made vocabulary lists in order to learn a complete list of words on the area on which I will be interviewed. Again, I wanted to test another method. I realized that during reading offers, I used to understand in general what it is written but not in detailed. I then took the vocabulary I didn't know in each offer and I created my own vocabulary lists. They are probably not as complete as that found in specialized lexicons but by developing them myself, it was easier for me to take ownership of them and therefore to learn them. In fact, I was able to make connections with offers I had read and businesses that I chose and so, I've realized that I learned differently, in another way that is less academic. I also feel that this way allows me to have a more sustainable learning through its links that created.

These changes allowed me to discover another way to learn and to discover an part of myself. Indeed, through these practices, I learned a new way to structure my project and my learning. I also discovered that I could do more links than I thought. Especially during these activities, I realized that with the vocabulary base I had, I could understand a wide variety words. Indeed, the German language uses many compound words. By knowing a base, it is possible to guess and understand a wide range of vocabulary and thus to learn again without any real effort.

Whether in my book or some internship's offers' readings or also during daily listening information, I discovered new formations of compound words. This allowed me to expand the vocabulary base I possess. Finally, I had fun to make some connections with the Alsatian language I often practice at home. Some words have a similar sounding and with the context in which I heard or I read the word, I can also make a link and learn vocabulary.

According to me, and after my experience in this project of learning this language, I have reached the conclusion that to learn a language, I need to start to learn basic vocabulary by an academic and linear way and with repeatedly. This way of proceeding, that comes instinctively and through which I manage to gather a large number of base words, is essential for me when I start a learn. However, I found that after a certain level, I learn more effectively by reading or listening to the language and through making links.

Finally, it is essential, for language learning, to listen and read. These are two very different concepts and one of it is no less necessary than the other. I need to train my ear and I have to get used to hearing the words, to recognize them and understand them by listening. However, in order to learn and memorize new words, I need to see them and to write them. I am a visual.

These findings have allowed me to highlight the way that suits me the most in order to learn a language. At first, using my side S which comes naturally to me, I reassure me in my learning because I think and I believe I can better visualize my progress. Then, in a second time, I learn by using my side N, which was unknown to me and therefore which wasn't operating in order to deepen my learning by using a more playful and relaxed form to learn.

1. **My personal development**

To start my apprenticeship, I wanted to take the time and I allowed me a preparation phase. This isn't in my habits to conduct a project. Indeed, I used to want to go straight to the goal. For once, I'm allowed a first phase during which I was able to refocus myself on me, on my abilities and on my wishes about the project. I also estimated my initial level and I took confidence in the concepts that I had learned and which I thought I had have completely forgot.

This first phase was ultimately crucial to the continuation of my project because this allowed me to give me the motivation and the desire to progress. It also allowed me to gradually regain confidence in me, without being immediately confronted with the look and the judgment of others. This has reassured me and this gives an overview about progress I'll have to do and this has showed the potential that I still had.

Then, I started a diary of personal development that I have held throughout the project. By writing my feelings in it, I was compelled to take time to reflect and to put into words my fears, my disappointments, my joys, and my desires ... about this project. By writing this and by seeing my notes, I could, during my periods of anxiety, look beyond to my project. It was a way for me to externalize my feelings and after that I had ability to detach myself and to analyse them as if they were written on a paper and no longer a part of me. This way of working has helped me a lot in perspective to prove myself that I was able to complete my project and that I should not aggravate or multiply my fears.

Finally, for the realization of my interviews, I also had done gradually. Firstly, to avoid panic that I had during my first call when I was not ready, and in order to help me in my future interview when I will have to answer to questions traps, I had prepared ready-make answers. Moreover, before conducting an interview, I posted the key words I had identified in different offers on the walls around me. I also posted on my computer's desk documents relating to the offer, my resume, my cover letter and the offer of internship. So I could create me a safe environment that allowed me to release the pressure that I have when I talk to someone in German. I noticed that in all the interviews I had the opportunity to perform, I had never used all these means. Nevertheless, the fact of creating me a framework, in which I know that whatever happens I can refer me, allowed me to be more serene.

I was fortunate during my project to have the opportunity to make my learning gradually and so to expose myself progressively to people with a more or less strong link with me. Indeed, I'm more comfortable when I speak German with someone who is outside my circle or who has no impact on my projects for example.

Firstly, by performing telephone interviews, it allowed me to release me and gain confidence. Then, thanks to Skype, I had the possibility to see me and see the people with whom I was communicating. I was able to perceive that these people were not laughing or grimacing because of my language faults, and therefore this showed me that I did not have to be ashamed. I made all this while being still at home; this gave me also a safe environment.

After that, I made an interview face to a friend of my parents that I know for a long time. I conducted this interview in order to train me to speak to someone in face to face and in this way she had could give me advices. It was not easy, I know this person since childhood and she is a very close friend from my mom. I really felt constantly judged but she managed to put me at ease and she really encouraged me in my efforts.

In addition, I had the chance to make several and frequently trips to Germany during which I had the opportunity to speak German with engineers and consultant who encouraged me in my career. This has motivated me even more and given even more confidence in my projects.

To finish, performing interview on site was a great step forward. I was like thrown into the lion's den; I had nothing to tying me apart my knowledge. This step was important for me because it showed me that I was able to succeed without outside help. The fact that I had the opportunity to conduct previous interviews with the techniques described allowed me to do this interview on-site more serenely because I had noticed that during the interviews by phone or Skype, I did not really used my memo or dictionary I was putting at my disposal if I had a lapse.

Finally, I decided to pass the step to speak in German to my family. To achieve this, I have long sought a way to do it. Indeed, to avoid feeling myself judged, I wanted to perform this step by using a way in which my family doesn't have doubt about the fact that it is a real challenge for me. I didn't want that they evaluate me directly. So I thought that instead of an interview with them, I could realize it in another way, easier for me. The game idea has occurred to me.

In fact, to attract less attention on me during this step, I decided to involve my family in a very simple manner. During a meal, just with my parents and my brother and my sister, I discussed the topic of language and I suggested that we should try to only speak in German during the meal. Thus, very simply, without too much pressure for me, my sister and my brother had willingly played the game and so I could express myself. I was initially embarrassed and then, we have shared together and without complex. We have laughed a lot. I really appreciated! I was able to really dare to speak to my family. Although my parents corrected me from time to time, I did not feel too judged because it was a play.

With this progression, I could gradually gain confidence in me to finally reach my final goal that was to be able to speak German with the most important persons to me: my family. By this process, I felt more relaxed with the people with whom I had the opportunity to have a discussion. This progressive path has allowed me to not create mental block. Like this, I avoided a big stress or a big fear that would have triggered a blockage. I finally advanced in my project such a way that I could have fun. I had ups and downs, great moments of doubt and anxiety but I was able to manage it through the logbook. Similarly, my fears and concerns have been softened by the gradual work.



1. **What about my language evolution?**

I'll split this part into four points: reading, writing, speaking and listening and I will describe the means and activities put in place to progress in this language.

1. **Reading**

The reading was the first activity that I made and that I chose in order to start my self-learning. Indeed, when I'm reading, I did not fear the judgment of others because nobody listens to me or can judge my level. Unlike listening, I could take as much time as I needed in order to understand.

At the beginning of my reading, I felt the need to search a few words in the dictionary. I was afraid of not understanding everything would penalize in my reading. Then I realized with a little thought that when I placed the words in context, I could easily understand. I didn't want to note directly the new words I met in the book because I wanted this reading to be primarily a pleasure more than a way to learn. In any case, I want my learning to be unconscious. Furthermore, some words appear several times in the book, this helped me to remember them and to memorize them.

Little by little, I felt more at ease and I read more and faster because I trusted in what I knew and also because I was more and more interested and captivated by the story.

Through reading this book, I could learn vocabulary by using the context of the book, by using the fact that the word is placed in a sentence and by using the repetition of the same word throughout the novel. This helped me to guess, to understand and to memorize vocabulary. I also realized that I could understand some words through the learning of the basic vocabulary I had learned the year before.

To finish, thanks to my internship’s search and by reading of offers, I could understand better and better. I could retain some formulations and the frequently used vocabulary. I could then reuse them during my interviews.

To store these words, I also wrote a list of the vocabulary to be able to read and memorize them in order to use them during interviews.

1. **Writing**

In particular during the second phase of my project, I was led to write many documents. This allowed me to progress in writing in that language.

I first all starts with writing my cover letter in German. The vocabulary that I found and used in my cover letter will be very useful during interviews to explain my educational background and my professional experience. It will be easier to explain what I did. In addition, thanks to the fact that my cover letter was corrected and re-corrected I memorized easier the new key words.

 I also wrote a letter; by using those from elders who also have written a letter in German. Thus, I was able, by seeking some keywords, to be as accurate as possible, and to learn new words. In addition, I asked Anna, a German student from ENSGSI for correcting my cover letter. By discussing with her, I understood the intricacies and nuances of the language. Subsequently, I also called the friend of my cousin, a German student in Freiburg to give me his opinion. It has also helped me and he shared me his advices. Thus I also learned some new words most used when we write than in oral. Thanks to them, I could have a letter the most correct and conventional possible. By correcting and by rereading me several times, I also found that it was easier to remember and to use the vocabulary that I had found.

I also have contacted a former student from the ENSGSI currently working not only in Germany but who also often is in contact with the recruiting service of his business. Thus, he gave me ideas in order to further deepen my documents for my application. He suggested me to create an additional document requested in Germany and he suggested me to further detail my cover letter. I also learned a lot by doing this. This allowed me to find the good words to explain all the projects I had the opportunity to realize. During interviews, I had more things to say and I had more words that came to my mind.

I performed a compilation from the methods and tools learned during the classes in ENSGSI. Thus, I could have a global vision of the tools learned, I could more easily explain or give examples of them in an interview.

To finish, to improve my German grammar without learning by heart all terminations from pronouns or determinants, I used the fact that I had many emails to write. In writing these short texts which should be in a formal German, I trained to correctly use German grammar, that is to say to wrote adjectives, pronouns and determinants correctly. For this, I first wrote each email, and then I checked everything with a table of German grammar. I have noticed that after a few emails, my reflexes returned, and I learned just as much as if I had spent an evening to learn by heart a list of tables. So I managed to convince me that there was also other ways to learn.

1. **Listening**

Before talking directly with someone, I decided to practice my understanding through films. To help me, I used subtitles but I quickly noticed that they always caught my attention throughout the film. I was always reading these subtitles I couldn’t get my eyes of them. Even if in the end I watched them not as much than at the beginning, be able to read them gave me an inner peace and helped me. Then, I decided to watch a film entirely in German. I managed to understand the meaning and I was never completely lost. I didn't understand every word but I managed to guess the overall meaning of sentences. I felt reassured about my overall understanding in this language. It is very important for me that I develop my ear because it is this means of communication that I'll have to use when I will make interviews for a job.

I quickly realized that watching a movie was not a way for me to learn to listen and understand the German language. I do not have the habit of watching movies, this takes too long for me and I take no pleasure in it.

I then searched for an Internet site with short videos of informations. I selected the site for which I felt a bigger affinity. I found that the site ZDF was adapted to what I was looking for and in order to had a good time.

In addition, I have tried several time slots in order to find one that suited me the most. I first decided that during a meal was the ideal time for me to setting up a new habit. In deed, I live alone that's why during my meals, in order to feel less alone, I always watch some videos. I didn't want it to become a chore or an obligation. In all other times of the day, I often have something else to do than to watch a video. I didn’t want this activity to become a stress rather than a pleasure. During a meal, I can do nothing else than eat and watch something. So this moment was really convenient for me. In addition, it would force me to take my time to eat and to not eat too fast. This is a plus for my health.

Moreover, I have a planning very changing; I struggle to find a daily schedule. I do not always take my dinner at home and I am rarely home at lunchtime.

These slot times were not convenient for me. The evening before going to bed was not a good slot time because I'm always tired from the day and I could not get concentration.

Thus, I decided to put this activity in the morning at breakfast time. This moment is very interesting for me because in the morning I love spend time to take my tea by watching the news of the day. In this moment of the day, I am both awake enough to understand what they say in the video and I enjoy taking time for doing this activity. No matter my planning of the day, I take my breakfast all day at a time. So I can respect the challenge to make this activity each day.

Furthermore, when I understand a new word, at the end of the video, I note it on a small post-it that I do not have away from me. Thus, at the end of the week, when my post-it is completed, I can note all the new words on my big vocabulary list, I can print it and hang it in my bathroom to memorize it. It became a game for me.

1. **Speaking**

At the beginning of my project, I was surprised to receive a first call from a company based in Stuttgart shortly after my first applications. I panicked very quickly and I had the feeling of not be able to express myself. My blocking has increased and that discouraged me. So I set up ways to reassure myself as described in the "personal development" paragraph and I trained to learn ready-made phrases ​​through the book that I bought on the "perfect interview". These memos reassured me during my initial interviews by phone or Skype.

Then, as I explained earlier, during the Thanksgiving holiday, I asked a teacher friend to make me pass a mock interview in German in order to see if I dare to speak in front of someone without feeling too uncomfortable.

Finally, to train to speak, there is nothing best like being confronted directly to persons. I went very often in Germany during these six months. There, I really could train with people whose mother language was German. Having no issues, I could train me and speak spontaneously, without embarrassment. I was able to see that little by little I was more comfortable and I was able to better find my words and to express myself.

**Conclusion and Perspectives** 



This project was very on emotional for me and I was feeling grow. I could take pleasure in my work because I saw that I progress in my psychological development as well as in my practical’s language. I know I have not finished and I still have some progress to do either personally, either in the language and either in my new approach’s use. Improvements can be making but I feel motivated to continue my path. I had big moments of doubt during which I asked myself a lot of questions but thanks to measures put in place, each time, I managed to bounce back.

I am motivated to continue my learning in this way especially since this project has allowed me to get, as I wanted, an internship in Germany. I will, in a few weeks, live and work in this country. This total immersion will allow me to grow even more. I want to continue to pursue the activity of watching news every morning, it became a habit and I enjoy it. The fun has also been the watchword of my project.

To evaluate myself is not an easy thing for me. I am rarely convinced about progress I make in a domain.

However, first of all on a personal level, I find that be successful to talk to my family and getting to manage my stress in an interview helped me a lot to improve. I would never have imagined doing those six months ago. So, hindsight, I see the evolution that I made in this project. Finally on this point, when I read the personal diary I kept throughout the project, I can only contact the path I travelled.

As regard to the different approach, I know that I will not forbid me to work this way of learn. Before, I considered that if my learning was not very academic and framed, it was not a good way to learn. But this project has opened my eyes to a different way of learning and, ultimately, I really enjoyed it.

Finally, in terms of language, this is where I have the most difficulty to evaluate me. How to determine the amount of vocabulary I learned or if I do fewer grammatical mistakes when I'm speaking? Or if it is my personal development that allowed me to use new concepts that came to me because I was less stressed? My vocabulary list shows me some progress but my confidence and my ease that I took show me that I have really progressed in that language.

Finally, I would like to make a little feedback on these three self-learning years. I must admit that initially I did not really see where to go, what to do. I was too conditioned by the conventional and academic way of learning. But the experiments that I have done and with some hindsight, I know that today I am able to learn alone. I can learn not only by making a planning, but also by evaluating myself and by paying attention to my feelings and my personal development and above all by taking pleasure. The latter is essential in my opinion for a sustainable learning.